



Mississippi Rural Health Association and the Mississippi Office of Rural Health

Crossroads



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Special points of interest

- MRHA joins with MORH to publish quarterly newsletter
- MRHA/MHA conference a source of great information
- Newton Regional Hospital opens new facility
- NRHA announces annual conference dates and speakers

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From the president's pen

It is quite appropriate that this issue of "Crossroads" has devoted coverage to our recent conference "Healthier Communities: Motivation for Working Together." There are two vital messages to be taken from this conference title. First, there is a new culture evolving that is beginning to redirect emphasis in healthcare from treating illnesses to promoting wellness. The "new measure" of quality of care is a healthy population, which most of us would agree, is worsening. Simply put, we are unhealthy and are becoming healthier. We as individuals, and also as part of a community, need to step up and take responsibility for promoting a healthy lifestyle in our lives and the lives around us.

Second, it is imperative that we are motivated to work together. Building healthier communities is not solely the work of healthcare providers, but requires a collaborative

effort by all the community's resources consisting of schools, industry, government, churches, and social organizations. And nowhere is this more imperative than in our rural communities, where resources are the most limited.

I hope you enjoy the review of our recent conference, and if you missed it, I hope you will make it a priority to

join us for future conferences.

With this issue of "Crossroads," I pass the pen to Rachel Welborn, the incoming MRHA President for 2006. I have had the opportunity and the pleasure to work with Rachel on numerous projects over the past three years both within the MRHA and outside the MRHA. She is a very dedicated and highly motivated individual, and I am extremely confident that she will advance the Association to new heights.

Also beginning with this issue, we are pleased to have our partner, the Mississippi Department of Health's Office of Rural Health, as a joint contributor and sponsor.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to serve as your President over the past year. I look forward to continuing my membership and participation in the Association as we work for better health for rural Mississippians.



Tim Thomas, MBA, President
Mississippi Rural Health
Association 2004-2005

From the director's desk

Greetings from the Mississippi Office of Rural Health (MORH). I hope all of you had a wonderful holiday season from Thanksgiving through New Year's Day.

One of the many functions of the MORH is to disseminate information concerning rural health issues, programs, and activities. With this new year comes a new, or

more appropriately put, a renewed activity of the MORH. I am pleased to announce the publication of a quarterly newsletter. Publication and distribution of the newsletter is a joint effort between our office and the Mississippi Rural Health Association. Our goal is to provide individuals and organizations with information

pertinent to rural health that is informational, educational, and easily accessible. The newsletter is also available on the Mississippi Department of Health Web site at www.msdh.state.ms.us.

Happy New Year!

Rozelia Harris, MBA
Director, MORH

Healthier Communities: Motivation for working together

Partnering to promote healthier communities was the heart of the day-long joint conference conducted by the Mississippi Rural Health Association and the Mississippi Hospital Association on November 8, 2005, at the Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center in Raymond.

Five separate presentations focused on different aspects of this important work. Dr. Aaron Shirley kicked off the event by highlighting the need to work together through a specific issue of helping those who are uninsured. He focused on his recent appointment to the Citizens' Health Care Working Group as one example of rallying community stakeholders around a common purpose.

(More information about the Citizens' Health Care Working Group and important upcoming meetings of this group can be found at www.citizenshealthcare.gov).

The Honorable Larry Otis spoke of creating a shared vision of community health promotion that could permeate all levels of community planning and coordination. He reminded the audience that "community development precedes economic development." Mr. Otis' servant lead-

ership led the city of Tupelo to become an award-winning model of how to bring communities together for this purpose. He also discussed his work with the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services and that committee's report to the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Part of moving a community toward better health is about getting the right partners on board. Ms. Lynn McGee of the Foundation for the Mid-South inspired conference participants to "Get the right people on the bus, get the wrong people off the bus, and get the right people in the right seats on the bus." She described the characteristics and benefits

of effective collaboration and the steps to building a foundation for collaboration.

An inevitable aspect of working together in a community involves economic issues. Under the guidance of Dr. Alan Barefield and Dr. Garen Evans of the Mississippi State University Extension Service, participants explored the connections between community growth and health care growth. Connecting the dots between these two aspects can be the key to engaging the business sectors and community development sectors in the process of improving community health.

Finally, a thought-provoking session was spent in reviewing the questions following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Thanks to the participation of several of our state's leaders in the recovery efforts, conference attendees got answers to key questions surrounding the catastrophe such as plans for improving disaster communication efforts, lessons learned from the past few month's events, and what can be done to better prepare for future disasters. Ms. Bettye Oliver of USDA's Rural Development served as moderator.

Panel members were Mr. (continued on page 3)



Members of the disaster response panel discuss key questions.

Newton Regional Hospital opens new facility

An official dedication and open house was held on November 22, 2005, at the new replacement facility for Newton Regional Hospital in Newton, Mississippi. Approximately 250 residents of the community attended the event. The keynote speaker for the event was Nick Walters, State Director of the USDA Rural Development in Mississippi. His agency is the funding source for a \$6.5 million direct loan that capitalized the construction, the first hospital project built from the ground up by the USDA in Mississippi.

The replacement facility is located on Highway 15 approximately one mile north

of the I-20 exit in Newton. The new 30-bed hospital has over 56,000 square feet



The new Newton Regional Hospital facility

including a 10,000 square foot hospital-based rural health clinic. The new facility replaces the 54 year-old hospital built under the Hill-Burton Act.

The hospital officially opened at the beginning of the new year. On January 1, 2006, the last patient was transferred thereby completing the relocation of the entire operations of Newton Regional Hospital to its new facility and location.

Congratulations on this fine facility for the people of Newton and surrounding areas! Rural healthcare in Newton County just took a leap forward!

Mississippi in Motion taking shape

Excitement is building as counties all over Mississippi prepare to launch *Mississippi in Motion*, a state-wide initiative designed to promote healthy lifestyles through exercise, proper nutrition, and social support. The program concept came from a tremendously successful effort in West Point, Mississippi, in which approximately 1,000 community members participated and collectively lost over 6,000 pounds. Following this success, Mississippi State University Extension Service refined and piloted the program in ten additional counties. The successes of these pilot projects mirrored those in West Point.



The twelve-week program begins with a registration session that is coupled with a health fair, during which participants' weight, height, body mass index, and blood pressure are recorded. Over the following ten weeks, participants attend weekly educational sessions on different healthy living topics. During the final week, the participants weigh out and enjoy a celebration.

One important aspect of the program is social support. Participants are encouraged to form teams of five members that become a support network during the program. The teams set goals and encourage each other toward success. Many of the participants said this was a key element in staying on course toward their goals.

Currently, approximately 20 additional counties are planning to launch the program in early 2006. Strong community partnerships make this possible.



Phillip Crane, Itawamba County Sheriff, weighing in with the help of Amy Brown from Fulton Family Medical Clinic

Partners include MSU Extension Service, local hospitals, Mississippi Department of Health, community health coalitions, rural health clinics, and a number of other community agencies and partners.

Healthier Communities: Motivation for working together (continued)

(continued from page 2)

Tom Ball (Mississippi State University Extension Service), Mr. Bill Brown (Mississippi Emergency Management Agency), Mr. Eddie Ivy (City of Meridian Public Safety Training Center), Mr. Jim Brinson (Mississippi Office of Homeland Security), Ms. Pam Nutt (Mississippi Department of Health), Ms. Joyce Pearson (Mississippi Hospital Association), and Mr. Delaine Stacey

(Mississippi Department of Public Safety).

Our thanks go to all the presenters and attendees for support of this effort. Our thanks also go to our partners in designing and sponsoring this event: the Mississippi Hospital Association and the Mississippi Department of Health.

Conference supporters included the Mississippi

Department of Health's State Office of Rural Health and the Mississippi Rural Health Corps, a collaborative partnership of the Mississippi State University Extension Service and the state's 15 community and junior colleges.

Additionally, we thank the following exhibitors for their



MHA's Mendal Kemp and former Tupelo mayor Larry Otis enjoying a break at the conference.

support and time during the conference: Bryson and Company of Ridgeland, Mississippi; Infoware of Madison, Mississippi; and Mississippi State University Extension Service, Department of Community Resource Development of Starkville, Mississippi.

The conference was a great opportunity to share information and build partnerships among our rural providers and supporters. Don't miss out next year!



Ms. Bettye Oliver of USDA's Rural Development served as moderator of the disaster relief panel.

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*A voice for health
in rural Mississippi*

We're on the Web!
<http://www.msrha.org>

National Rural Health Association 2006 Annual Conference Week

13th Annual Rural Minority and Multicultural Health Conference

*"Kaleidoscope of Rural Minority
and Multicultural Health Care Issues"*

May 15-16, 2006

Rural Medical Educators Meeting

May 16, 2006

29th Annual Conference

"Pioneering New Frontiers"

May 17-19

Nugget Hotel • Reno, NV

Rural Health Policy Institute

Invited Speakers

- Mark McClellan, MD, Administrator,
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
- David Brailer, MD, PhD,
National Coordinator for
Health Information Technology
- Marcia Brand, PhD, Director,
Office of Rural Health Policy



February 27—March 1, 2006

Washington, DC • Grand Hyatt
www.NRHA Rural.org/conferences